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## Public Assesses Pros and Cons of Possible Hillary Clinton Presidency

See her being first female president as best thing

by Jeffrey M. Jones

### GALLUP NEWS SERVICE

PRINCETON, NJ -- Former first lady and current New York Sen. Hillary Clinton remains the frontrunner for the Democratic nomination in public opinion polls. Also, she does no worse than tie with the leading Republican candidates in general election trial heat preference surveys. Given that she is a serious contender to be the nation's 44th president, a new Gallup survey asked a nationally representative sample of Americans what would be the best and worst things about a Clinton presidency.

More than any other specific comment, Americans cite the historical significance of Clinton being the first female commander-in-chief as the best outcome of her possible election. But a significant percentage says "nothing" positive would result from her being elected. While there is no consensus on what would be the worst thing about a Clinton presidency, issue disagreement is a common theme, especially among Republicans. Bill Clinton's possible return to the White House is raised as both a positive and a negative outcome.

### The Upside

Regardless of their views of Hillary Clinton, all respondents in the late June poll were asked to say what would be the "best or most positive thing about a Hillary Clinton presidency?" The most frequently occurring specific response -- given by 22% -- is a reference to the fact that Clinton would be the first female president. The next two most frequent responses mention her ability to deal with two of the key 2008 election issues -- healthcare (10%) and Iraq (9%). Seven percent mention each of two personal characteristics that would serve her well in the Oval Office -- her experience and that she is capable and competent. Six percent mention the fact that her husband, Bill Clinton, would be back in the White House and able to advise her.

Notably, 28% of Americans, say there would be "nothing" positive about a Clinton presidency.

*Next, suppose Hillary Clinton is elected president in 2008. In your view, what would be the best or most positive thing about a Hillary Clinton presidency? [PROBE: Any others?] [OPEN-ENDED]*

	%
Clinton would be the first female president	22
Healthcare issue/would reform healthcare	10
Would get the U.S. out of Iraq/end war	9

Clinton's experience	7
Capable/competent	7
Bill Clinton would be back in the White House/would help and advise her	6
Change (from Bush)	5
Democratic agenda/platform	4
Would be good for the people/common people	4
Clinton is intelligent/smart	4
Economy	3
Open/honest government	2
Education issue	*
Other	2
Nothing (vol.)	28
No opinion	12

Percentages add to more than 100% due to multiple responses

\* = Less than 0.5%

(vol.) = Volunteered response

The fact that Clinton would be the first female president is the top single specific mention among all party groups, including 25% of Democrats, 24% of independents, and 17% of Republicans. The most significant partisan difference is that a majority of Republicans, 56%, volunteer that there would no positives in a Clinton presidency. Twenty-five percent of independents also say this, as do 7% of Democrats.

Men (20%) and women (23%) are about equally likely to mention Clinton's becoming the first female president as the best thing about her being elected.

That historic possibility is something that apparently excites younger Americans -- 37% of 18- to 29-year-olds say her being the first woman to hold the job would be the best thing about her being elected president. That sentiment is shared by 24% of

30- to 49-year-olds but only 12% of those aged 50 and older.

### The Downside

There is no consensus on the negative aspects of a Clinton presidency -- the top five specific mentions are essentially equal from a statistical perspective. These include mentions that she is "too liberal" or "a socialist" (10%), that "Bill Clinton would be back in the White House" (10%), that "she is not qualified" or "would not succeed in the job" (9%), that the respondent simply dislikes her (7%), and mentions of past "Clinton scandals" or "baggage" (7%).

Whereas 28% say there would be nothing good about a Clinton presidency, only 12% say there would be nothing bad about it.

*And, what would be the worst or most negative thing about a Hillary Clinton presidency? [PROBE: Any others?]  
[OPEN-ENDED]*

	%
Too liberal/socialist	10
Bill Clinton would be back in the White House	10
Not qualified/would not succeed	9
Just don't like her	7
Clinton scandals/baggage	7
Country not ready for a female president	6
Clinton's views on the war in Iraq	6
Getting elected in the first place/that she won	5
Dishonest/does not tell the truth	5
Her ability to deal with foreign policy	4
Her views/political agenda in general (non-specific)	4
Views on healthcare/wants socialized medicine/government system	4
Don't want a female president	3
Would raise taxes	2

Clinton is too indecisive/changes her mind too often	2
Wants gun control	2
Dislike her view on the immigration issue	1
Other	3
Nothing (vol.)	12
Everything (vol.)	2
No opinion	15

Percentages add to more than 100% due to multiple responses

\* = Less than 0.5%

(vol.) = Volunteered response

Again, there are significant differences by party affiliation in the percentages who volunteer that there would be nothing bad about a Clinton presidency. Twenty percent of Democrats say this, compared with 10% of independents and 4% of Republicans.

The following table shows where partisans differ on the specific negative aspects of a potential Clinton presidency. Three of the top five Republican concerns involve issues, including 18% who say she is "too liberal" or "a Socialist." Independents (12%) and Democrats (9%) are somewhat more likely than Republicans (7%) to express doubts about her qualifications for the job.

**Mentions of Worst Things About a Hillary Clinton Presidency,  
by Party Affiliation**

<b>Republicans</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Independents</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Democrats</b>	<b>%</b>
Too liberal/Socialist	18	Not qualified	12	Not qualified	9
Bill back in White House	11	Bill back in White House	10	Bill back in White House	8
Don't like her	10	Clinton scandals	9	Country not ready for female president	8

Views on healthcare	10 Too liberal	7 Clinton scandals	7
Views on Iraq War	9 Don't like her	7 Too liberal	6

In order to gain more insight into Americans' concerns about Clinton being president, the responses were arranged into broad categories dealing with her issue positions (such as being "too liberal" or her "views on Iraq"), her personality or character ("not qualified" or "don't like her"), or the political implications of Clinton being elected president ("Bill would be back in the White House" or "Clinton scandals"). See the "Survey Methods" section for the complete classifications.

Forty-four percent of Republicans mention something about her issue positions or policy preferences when describing the bad things that would result from a Clinton presidency. Twenty-seven percent of Republicans mention something political and 23% mention something about Clinton's personality.

In contrast, Democrats and independents are both more likely to mention political considerations as possible downsides than to mention either issues or personality.

**Percentages Mentioning Issues, Personality, or Politics as a "Bad Thing"  
About a Hillary Clinton Presidency,  
by Party Affiliation**

	<b>All</b>	<b>Republicans</b>	<b>Independents</b>	<b>Democrats</b>
	%	%	%	%
Issues	28	44	23	18
Personality	22	23	25	19
Political	29	27	31	29

Not surprisingly, Democrats commonly cite issues when detailing the benefits of Clinton being elected. Nearly as many Democrats mention her personality characteristics when discussing the positives. Republicans, on the other hand, have very little positive to say. Note that the single most common response -- being the first female president -- was not included in this classification. As many people mention that single response as mention any of the broad categories.

**Percentages Mentioning Issues, Personality, or Politics as a "Good Thing"  
About a Hillary Clinton Presidency,  
by Party Affiliation**

	<b>All</b>	<b>Republicans</b>	<b>Independents</b>	<b>Democrats</b>
	%	%	%	%
Issues	21	9	18	33

Personality	20	6	20	30
Political	11	3	13	15

### Survey Methods

Results for this Gallup Panel study are based on telephone interviews with 1,014 national adults, aged 18 and older, conducted June 25-28, 2007. Gallup Panel members are recruited through random selection methods. The panel is weighted so that it is demographically representative of the U.S. adult population. For results based on these samples, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of sampling error is  $\hat{\pm}4$  percentage points.

### Categorization of Mentions of Good Things About Possible Clinton Presidency

Issues	Personality	Political
Democratic agenda/platform	Her experience	Bill back in White House
Healthcare	Open, honest government	Change from Bush
Education	Intelligent/smart	
Economy	Good for the people	
Iraq War	Capable/competent	

### Categorization of Mentions of Bad Things About Possible Clinton Presidency

Issues	Personality	Political
Too liberal/a Socialist	Do not like her	Do not want a female president
Healthcare	Not qualified	Country not ready for female president
Foreign policy	Dishonest	Bill Clinton back in White House
Gun control	Too indecisive	Getting elected in first place
Iraq War		

Taxes

Her views/agenda

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